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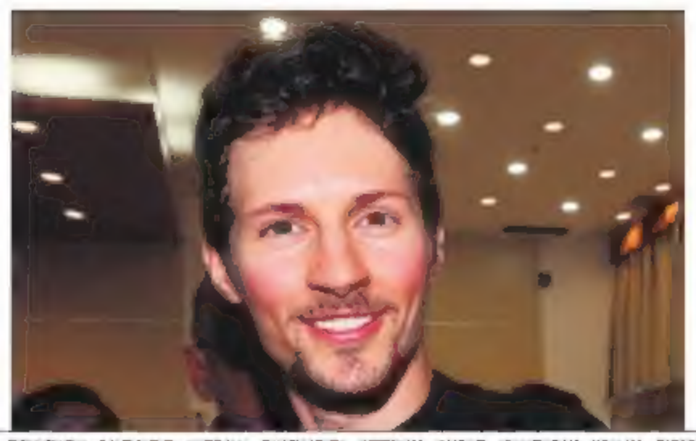

TELEGRAM CEO DUROV ARRESTED BY FRENCH AUTHORITIES

The founder and CEO of the messaging service was detained at Paris-Le Bourget Airport late on Saturday upon his arrival from Azerbaijan. Pavel Durov was arrested over allegations that Telegram has been used for money laundering, drug trafficking and sharing child sexual content, media reports said. He is accused of failing to take steps to curb criminal uses of his messaging service. The warrant was issued at the request of the country's interior ministry | PTI

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Israeli Air Force intercepts a Hezbollah UAV over north Israel on Sunday; close-up of the projectile being blown into pieces | AFP

Israel hits Lebanon with 100 jets in 'self defence'

Hezbollah fires over 300 rockets, says first phase of attack is over

AGENCIES

ISRAEL on Sunday launched its biggest air offensive in recent times as it sent over 100 fighter jets into Lebanon to destroy "rocket launchers aimed at Israel", claiming Hezbollah was about to unleash a large-scale attack against it.

The Israeli military said its fighter jets had destroyed "thousands" of Hezbollah rocket launchers "aimed toward northern Israel and some were aimed toward central Israel", far from the border.

Meanwhile, Iran-backed Hezbollah rejected Israel's claims of having thwarted its attack, saying it had fired 320 Katyusha rockets targeting "enemy positions" across the border. This, it said, was the first phase of its retaliation for Israel's assassination of its commander Fuad Shukr last month.

In a televised speech on Sunday, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said his group targeted a military intelligence base near Tel Aviv. However, Israeli sources said there were no hits on the base.

Hezbollah's claims

The militant group said it targeted 11 bases, barracks and military positions in northern Israel and the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, and dismissed Israel's claim to have thwarted its attack. It, however, did not provide evidence for its claims

Following the Sunday airstrikes, three deaths were reported in Lebanon. While Hezbollah clarified that it was not planning any further strikes as of now, Israel's foreign minister said his country did not seek a full-scale war. Both sides claimed they had struck only military targets.

The US helped track the barrage of rockets and drones launched by Hezbollah against Israel, but was not involved in strikes in Lebanon or in shooting down incoming projectiles, AFP reported quoting a US defence official.

The Hezbollah has traded near-daily cross-border fire with Israeli forces throughout the Gaza war, in a campaign it says in support of Hamas. According to experts, any major escalation in the fighting, which began in parallel with the war in Gaza, risks morphing into a regional conflagration drawing in Hezbollah's backer Iran and Israel's main ally the US. The situation remains tense though both sides hinted they have no immediate plans to continue strikes. PTI

Pic of Darshan raises doubts of VIP life in jail

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

A photo of actor Darshan Thoogudeepa, who is lodged at Bengaluru Central Prison at Parappana Agrahara in connection with the kidnap and murder of Renukaswamy, holding a cigarette and chatting with other inmates inside the prison, and the visuals of a video call purportedly made from the prison surfaced on Sunday, raising doubts that the prison staff might have extended preferential treatment to the actor.

In the photo, Darshan is seen sitting with his manager Nagaraj -- also an accused in the Renukaswamy murder case, and rowdy-sheeters, Wilson Garden Naga and Kulla Seena, inside the quarantined area of the prison, where high-security prisoners are generally lodged. In the photograph, which appears to have been clicked from the window of a cell, the actor is seen holding a coffee mug in one hand and a lit cigarette in the other. It is said that a jail inmate, who clicked the photo, had shared it with his wife and it was widely shared later.

A photo shows actor Darshan holding a coffee mug and a cigarette, and sitting and chatting with other inmates, in the Bengaluru Central Prison | EXPRESS

Meanwhile, a video clip of around 10 seconds has also surfaced, in which a person on a video call gives the mobile phone to Darshan, who speaks to another person on the call.

No senior officials from the Department of Prisons and Correctional Services were available for a comment.

CONTINUED ON: P3

CBI conducts raids over irregularities in RG Kar

SULAGNA SENGUPTA @ Kolkata

THE CBI's anti-corruption unit on Sunday conducted searches on the premises of ex-principal of R G Kar Medical College and Hospital Sandip Ghosh, former medical superintendent cum vice-principal Sanjay Vashisth, and 13 others in and around Kolkata in connection with the probe into financial irregularities at the state-run institute.

Officials said the CBI team reached Ghosh's residence at 6 am but was made to wait for one-and-half hours before they were let in. The sleuths started questioning Ghosh at 8 am and it continued till late night. The CBI's anti-corruption unit also searched the residences and offices of those engaged in supplying materials for the management and care of patients.

Sources said the CBI team visited the premises of Dr Debasish Som, Sandip Ghosh's close aide. He is the head of the department of forensic science at RG Kar. CBI sleuths called the head clerk of the forensic medicine department to know the whereabouts of the alleged organ racket. According to CBI sources, the racket sells body parts sourced from various state-run medical colleges; officials said Dr Sandip Ghosh and his allies have been giving cover to the racket.

A senior officer said: "We have got lots of information regarding the illegal racket in the state. We are in search of other doctors who are involved in the scam. Several doctors working in private hospitals are also involved in the scam."

Meanwhile, the lie detection test on Sanjay Roy, the main accused in the rape-murder of a trainee doctor at RG Kar hospital, was conducted at Kolkata's Presidency Jail where he is lodged. Four persons including former principal Sandip Ghosh underwent the polygraph test on Saturday, the officials said.

Crimes against women unpardonable sin: Modi

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said crimes against women are unpardonable sins and the guilty should not be spared.

He was speaking at the 'Lakhpati Didi Sammelan' in north Maharashtra's Jalgaon, days after the rape-murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata's RG Kar Hospital and the sexual assault of two minor girls at a school in Maharashtra's Badlapur, triggered a nationwide uproar.

"The message should go from top to bottom. This sin is unpardonable. Governments will come and go, but protecting life and women's dignity is a big responsibility of all of us, both as a society and as a government," Modi said.

Modi said the guilty should not be spared and those helping them should also be dealt with firmly. "Those helping the perpetrators of crimes against women should not be spared. Be it a hospital, school, government or police station, at whatever level negligence occurs, everyone should be held accountable," he said.

Modi said Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which replaced the Indian Penal Code, will provide greater support to women in achieving justice. "Earlier, there were delays, and we have removed all this in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. If a woman does not want to visit a police station, she can file an e-FIR from her residence, and the police will have to act. There is provision for death penalty and life imprisonment for atrocities against women," Modi said.

Woman feeds villagers after Gruha Lakshmi scheme restarts

SUNIL PATIL @ Belagavi

AN elderly woman, who had taken a vow in a temple for the restart of Gruha Lakshmi scheme -- which had halted briefly, offered a special meal to villagers after the government restarted depositing Rs 2,000 to women heads of families.

The woman, **Akkatai Langoti**, who is 65 years old and lives with her mentally challenged son at Susatti village of Raibag taluk in Belagavi district, became the talking point of the entire state after she offered holige oota to fellow villagers on Friday. She bore the expenses from a part of the Gruha Lakshmi money she had saved for the purpose.

Villagers said Akkatai is poor and earns her living through farming and selling buffalo milk. "But she is spiritual and actively participates in all religious activities. When the money being deposited under Gruha Lakshmi stopped for a while, she had taken the vow at the temple of Adavi Laxmi -- the village deity," they said.

Akkatai told her neighbours Dundawwa Nooli (70) and Lakkawwa Hattiholi (55) and other women about her plan.

CONTINUED ON: P5

Only two great Indian bustards seen in K'taka

AMIT S UPADHYE @ Ballari

WITH just two individuals of Great Indian Bustard birds being sighted in the last six months in Ballari district, the state forest department is planning some urgent measures to safeguard the last remaining population of these majestic birds.

Around 14 sqkm of land in Siruguppa taluk of Ballari district, which has been declared the GIB sanctuary, now serves as the last remaining habitat of these birds in Karnataka. Six months ago, there were six birds in Siruguppa and today, there are just two.

Desperate measures planned by the forest department include GPS-tagging of the birds, artificial hatching of eggs, introducing young birds to the forest, involving local communities and setting up a research centre in Siruguppa. The Ballari division of the forest department has requested the state government to allow GPS tagging of the two individuals (one male and one female) sighted in Siruguppa and surroundings. The forest division has already set up CCTV cameras to constantly monitor the movement of the birds along the Karnataka-Andhra Pradesh border. P5

Fruit flies from Dharwad to fly to space!

MALLIKARJUN HIREMATH
@ Dharwad

FRUIT flies from Dharwad are flying to space! The flies, with the scientific name Drosophila melanogaster, will be used in an experiment in space during the Gaganyaan manned mission, which is scheduled for next year. The flies have been developed by the Department of Biotechnology at the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Dharwad.

It may sound strange, but fruit flies share about 77% of genes that cause diseases in humans. The flies are crucial to study the formation of kidney stones among astronauts in space.

INTO VOID & BACK

- Both male and female flies will be sent to space
- The study to cost Rs 78 lakh
- The specialised kit housing fruit flies will have food prepared with foodgrain powder
- The astronauts, the flies and other payloads will land in Indian Ocean after the mission.

Kidney stones are a common health issue among astronauts. Reports indicate that kidney stones have been observed in astronauts over 30 times during space missions. They experience an increased risk of kidney stone formation because of elevated calcium excretion from bone loss, increased urine acidity, consumption of dehydrated food, reduced urine output and other factors.

"Fruit flies are important to better understand how the molecular mechanisms work when kidney stones are formed among humans in space. The experiment will help come up with improved treatments, particularly for Indian astronauts," said Ravi Kumar Hosmani, Assistant Professor at the UAS Biotechnology Department. P5

PEAK OF VALOUR

5-yr-old Punjab boy youngest Asian to scale Mt Kilimanjaro

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

AT the age of five, most children would not have heard of Tanzania's Mount Kilimanjaro. But for five-year-old Teghbir Singh from Ropar in Punjab, it was a year-old dream that came true when he reached Africa's tallest peak on August 23. In doing so, he became the youngest person from Asia to scale the 5,895-metre tall mountain.

After a year of preparation, Teghbir started the trek on August 18 and reached the Uhuru peak on August 23, battling fierce snowstorms on the way. He was accompanied by his father Sukhinderdeep Singh, two guides and supporting staff.

"I was told to chant Waheguru when I felt tired and I did that. It helped me scale the summit," Teghbir, a first-standard student of Shiwalik Public School at Ropar, told this newspaper over the phone. With this feat, he equaled the world record of summiting Mt Kilimanjaro at age five by a Serbia boy Ognjen Živkovi on August 6 last year.

Teghbir Singh during his trek to Mount Kilimanjaro | SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"Teghbir started preparing almost a year ago. He was trained by Bikramjit Singh Ghuman who helped him with the exercises to increase cardiovascular health and lung capacity to deal with altitude sickness," Singh said.

Commenting on his son's journey to the peak, Singh said, "Every day he trekked around 8-10 kilometers and temperatures dropped with every ascent he made. He walked and stayed in a low-oxygen altitude in a minus-grade temperature for almost a week". The push to the summit was undertaken during fierce snowstorms. "It was a very challenging moment for the entire crew," Singh said.

Teghbir had trekked to the Everest Base Camp in April.

EXPRESS READ

Rajnath visits top US naval facility

Washington: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visited one of the world's largest water tunnel facilities for testing submarines in the US, amidst a proposal for the establishment of a similar facility for indigenous design and development in India.

Excise scam: SC to hear Nair's plea tomorrow

New Delhi: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on August 27 the bail plea of former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) communication in-charge Vijay Nair in a money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam.